

Well, I can tell you, in talking to physicians throughout my State, the cost of repaying those loans can start off a career in hundreds of thousands of dollars of debt. Somewhere along the process we ended up taxing the National Health Service Corps scholarship and loan money to these physicians, as the IRS saw the payments as taxable income. In fact, later Congress realized: Well, that was not such a great idea of taxing, so we will give more money to the National Health Service Corps to pay for those taxes and then tax that money on top of it. We ended up paying 40 percent of the program in taxes instead of creating the opportunity for those physicians. So this program will help get about 67 percent more physicians into rural health care in America.

The last thing I would like to say is that as we continue to move through the rest of how we finish up this year, we want to continue to give an opportunity to make sure the National Guard and Reserve men and women in our country are well taken care of. I am proud the Senate passed back to the House a bill that also included Senator LANDRIEU's language about helping the National Guard.

Washington State is a State that is greatly impacted, and we certainly need to help and support taking care of our National Guard.

I yield the floor.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The Senator from Alabama.

THE ECONOMY

Mr. SESSIONS. Madam President, I want to share a few thoughts about the status of the economy. As we finish up this session, everybody has a lot of different views, and we are in a political season. I think it is good to talk about it and discuss the issue and see what the facts are, and let the American people make up their own mind about what the circumstances are that face our country.

One thing that I think is important for all of us to remember is that without economic growth we will not create jobs.

When we are in an economic situation in which we do not have growth, then we are not going to have jobs created. We may not lose those jobs immediately, but as growth lags, the number of jobs will fall as well. As growth goes up, jobs will be created. Jobs, as the economists say, tend to lag behind growth, but they follow growth. When economic growth is declining, the number of available jobs will decline. When economic growth is going up, the number of available jobs also will be going up.

Growth in the American economy is affected by many different things. The economy can be affected by world events, or by the strength of the economy in other nations. Generally, we are not threatened by strong economies in other parts of the world. Our

economy does better when other economies are doing well, and when other economies are doing poorly, our economy tends to be dragged down.

The American economy is also impacted by business factors, by psychological factors, and by governmental factors that impact jobs and growth. If the President could snap his fingers and make everything happen right, we would never have any problems. But we know the President cannot do such a thing. We know we need to be careful about placing blame and credit.

I would like to show this chart. These are the years beginning in 1995 going into 2003. We had good years through the 1990s.

The chart shows these undisputed facts. Former President Bush suffered an economic slowdown in the second year or so of his administration and it resulted in the phrase: It's the economy, stupid. But the truth is, the nation's economy began to rebound significantly before former President Bush's term was finished. In fact, during his last year in office, he got little or no credit for the rebounding economy because he had been tagged by his political opponents for causing an economic slowdown earlier. The fact is that this characterization was inaccurate, and that there was pretty solid economic growth during this time.

President Clinton, I submit, inherited a growing economy from former President Bush. That is just a matter of fact. And it grew well through the 1990s. We had low quarters and good quarters, but overall the economy showed strength during this period.

In President Clinton's last year in office, however, things began to sour. By the time he had left office, the Nasdaq, the high tech stock market, had lost one half of its value. During the third quarter, of President Clinton's last year in office, the economy experienced negative growth, though there was growth in the fourth quarter of his last year in office.

But the first quarter that President Bush inherited, in which the dynamics in the economy were already set, and upon which he cannot be fairly said to have influenced, the economy suffered further negative growth. The second quarter that President Bush inherited also experienced negative growth. The third quarter was 9/11, with its negative impact on the economy. That is what President Bush faced when he took office. Yes, we had some great years in the 1990s, but he inherited an economy that was in trouble, and I submit that fact is not disputable.

He had to make some choices. Are we going to take the liberal idea, the big Government, the tax-and-spend idea that we were going to get out of an economic slowdown, a recession, by increasing taxes and by increasing the size of Government, or are we going to place our faith and hope in the ingenuity, the creativity, the work capability, of the American people?

President Bush placed his faith in the American people. He fought for, and we

battled on the floor of this Congress and passed, a substantial tax cut that was designed to revive the economy, which was in trouble and was costing people jobs, making people worried. The stock market had gone down. It was a nervous time for all of us. We remember that.

President Bush led. And look what happened. As the chart shows, in the wake of his actions the economy starts coming back. When we had the second tax cut that took place in 2003, in June, the middle of the year 2003—and this chart only goes through 2003—we ended up with 8 percent growth during the third quarter of that year. Eight percent growth in that quarter is the highest growth rate we have seen in 20 years. The fourth quarter was also about 4 percent. The first quarter of this year was 4.5 percent growth. The next quarter was 3 percent growth. So we have been blessed to see that this recession is one of the shortest recessions in history. It is something for which we ought to be thankful.

Mr. SARBANES. Will the Senator yield for a question?

Mr. SESSIONS. I am pleased to try to answer a question. I know how knowledgeable the Senator is in these areas.

Mr. SARBANES. If the Senator's chart continued out into this year—I take it the chart stops in 2003?

Mr. SESSIONS. I found that in my office a few moments ago. The first quarter was 4.5 percent.

Mr. SARBANES. If it continued out into this year, it would show a descending line, would it not?

Mr. SESSIONS. It would show the first three quarters of this year would average higher than the last 20 years of growth in America.

Mr. SARBANES. I want to focus on—

Mr. SESSIONS. It would show a decline from probably 4.5 percent to 3 percent growth.

Mr. SARBANES. That is all I wanted to hear.

Mr. SESSIONS. You are not going to stay up there at 4.5 forever. But I think the numbers look pretty good. And we did it by investing and putting our faith in the private sector to create jobs and growth. It is pretty exciting.

We don't know how the economy will go. President Bush, as I said, is not a magician. He can't make things happen by waving a magic wand. Any of us who have been around here long enough know that. You get blame and you get credit. Sometimes it is not the President's fault, sometimes it may be the Congress's fault. Sometimes it may be factors beyond any of our control, historic factors.

Because we have had substantial productivity increases, which means we can produce more widgets for less investment and often fewer workers, that has made us competitive and helped our economy, but it has also placed stresses on job production. We have had particularly noticeable productivity increases in manufacturing. As a

matter of fact, the whole world is seeing a decline in manufacturing jobs because plants can produce more products with fewer people at less cost.

Since August of 2003, we have had 1.9 million new jobs created. But significantly, in the year 2004, we have had 97,000 new manufacturing jobs created.

That is good. That is something we ought to be pleased about. Let me note that the unemployment rate has fallen to 5.4 percent. It was 6.3 percent last June. It is now 5.4 percent, which is lower than the average unemployment rate for the 1970s, 1980s, or the 1990s.

The gross domestic product—the net production of goods and services in America—has grown for 11 straight quarters. So we have gotten out of this negative growth pattern left to President Bush by former President Clinton, and we have had 11 straight quarters of growth.

I think a factor in that was the President's leadership, for which I am very grateful. Some have said that job growth has failed to keep up with population growth. But that is not true. As the Joint Economic Committee, of which I am a member, reported: Since the unemployment rate peaked at 6.3 percent last June, total employment has increased by 2.2 million. The labor force has increased by 949,000.

That means there are 949,000 more workers. Unemployment has fallen by 1.2 million. Due to the large increase in employment and the large decrease in unemployment, unemployment has fallen significantly despite population growth.

I think Senator CORNYN is correct in saying that there exists in our country today a larger than normal number of people who are working out of their homes, working as independent contractors, as consultants, as truck drivers, and other things, who don't show up on a classic payroll. The statistics from the household survey that pick up that form of employment have been looking much better than the payroll survey for some time. The payroll survey is a valuable survey, but the household survey is valuable, too. The emphasis in complaining about President Bush's leadership does ignore, consistently, and without variation, the more positive numbers that show up in the household survey.

I think President Bush and this Congress have dealt with a very difficult problem—this economic slowdown. We did it in a way that is consistent with America's heritage and American values. As Americans, we are not a people who embrace a socialist, state-run economy. We are a vital, vibrant, innovative, creative people, and this allows our economy, because we have no governmental domination of it, to flourish and reach its highest possible ideals.

That is why the Europeans, in my view, are not doing as well. Germany and France have double-digit unemployment of 10, 11, 12 percent, because they have a state-run, state-dominated, regulated, bureaucratic govern-

ment with high taxes. It has made it difficult for them to be competitive in the world marketplace. Why would we ever want to emulate that? Why would we ever want to go to the socialist European ideal? Why would we not want to affirm the direction that President Bush is leading us?

I think Congress is working in order to follow the American ideal of freedom and independence, low taxes, and limited regulations.

HOME OWNERSHIP OPPORTUNITIES FOR NATIVE AMERICANS ACT OF 2004

Mr. SESSIONS. Madam President, I ask unanimous consent that the Committee on Indian Affairs be discharged from further consideration of S. 2571, and that the Senate proceed to its immediate consideration.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The clerk will state the bill by title.

The assistant legislative clerk read as follows:

A bill (S. 2571) to clarify the loan guarantee authority under title VI of the Native American Housing Assistance and Self-Determination Act of 1996.

There being no objection, the Senate proceeded to consider the bill.

Mr. SESSIONS. Madam President, I ask unanimous consent that the bill be read the third time and passed, the motion to reconsider be laid upon the table, with no intervening action or debate, and that any statements relating to this measure be printed in the RECORD.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. Without objection, it is so ordered.

The bill (S. 2571) was read the third time and passed, as follows:

S. 2571

Be it enacted by the Senate and House of Representatives of the United States of America in Congress assembled,

SECTION 1. SHORT TITLE.

This Act may be cited as the "Homeownership Opportunities for Native Americans Act of 2004".

SEC. 2. FEDERAL GUARANTEES FOR FINANCING FOR TRIBAL HOUSING ACTIVITIES.

Section 601 of the Native American Housing Assistance and Self-Determination Act of 1996 (25 U.S.C. 4191) is amended by adding at the end the following:

"(d) LIMITATION ON PERCENTAGE.—A guarantee made under this title shall guarantee repayment of 95 percent of the unpaid principal and interest due on the notes or other obligations guaranteed."

HOME OWNERSHIP OPPORTUNITIES FOR NATIVE AMERICANS ACT OF 2004

Mr. SESSIONS. Madam President, I ask unanimous consent that the Committee on Indian Affairs be discharged from further consideration of H.R. 4471, and that the Senate proceed to its immediate consideration.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The clerk will state the bill by title.

The assistant legislative clerk read as follows:

A bill (H.R. 4471) to clarify the loan guarantee authority under title VI of the Native American Housing Assistance and Self-Determination Act of 1996.

There being no objection, the Senate proceeded to consider the bill.

Mr. SESSIONS. Madam President, I ask unanimous consent that the bill be read the third time and passed, the motion to reconsider be laid upon the table, with no intervening action or debate, and that any statements relating to this measure be printed in the RECORD.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. Without objection, it is so ordered.

The bill (H.R. 4471) was read the third time, and passed.

UNACCOMPANIED ALIEN CHILD PROTECTION ACT OF 2004

Mr. SESSIONS. Madam President, I ask unanimous consent that the Senate proceed to the immediate consideration of calendar No. 541, S. 1129.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The clerk will state the bill by title.

The assistant legislative clerk read as follows:

A bill (S. 1129) to provide for the protection of unaccompanied alien children, and for other purposes.

There being no objection, the Senate proceeded to consider the bill, which had been reported from the Committee on the Judiciary, with an amendment to strike all after the enacting clause and insert in lieu thereof the following: (Strike the part shown in black brackets and insert the part shown in italic.)

S. 1129

Be it enacted by the Senate and House of Representatives of the United States of America in Congress assembled,

[SECTION 1. SHORT TITLE; TABLE OF CONTENTS.

[(a) SHORT TITLE.—This Act may be cited as the "Unaccompanied Alien Child Protection Act of 2003".

[(b) TABLE OF CONTENTS.—The table of contents for this Act is as follows:

[Sec. 1. Short title; table of contents.

[Sec. 2. Definitions.

[TITLE I—CUSTODY, RELEASE, FAMILY REUNIFICATION, AND DETENTION

[Sec. 101. Procedures when encountering unaccompanied alien children.

[Sec. 102. Family reunification for unaccompanied alien children with relatives in the United States.

[Sec. 103. Appropriate conditions for detention of unaccompanied alien children.

[Sec. 104. Repatriated unaccompanied alien children.

[Sec. 105. Establishing the age of an unaccompanied alien child.

[Sec. 106. Effective date.

[TITLE II—ACCESS BY UNACCOMPANIED ALIEN CHILDREN TO GUARDIANS AD LITEM AND COUNSEL

[Sec. 201. Guardians ad litem.

[Sec. 202. Counsel.

[Sec. 203. Effective date; applicability.

[TITLE III—STRENGTHENING POLICIES FOR PERMANENT PROTECTION OF ALIEN CHILDREN

[Sec. 301. Special immigrant juvenile visa.

[Sec. 302. Training for officials and certain private parties who come into contact with unaccompanied alien children.